
BBC LEARNING ENGLISH

The English We Speak

Out of order

The logo for BBC Learning English, featuring the letters 'BBC' in a white box above the words 'LEARNING ENGLISH' in white text on a teal background.

This is not a word-for-word transcript

Feifei

Hello and welcome to The English We Speak. I'm Feifei.

Neil

And I'm Neil. Hi everyone.

Feifei

Is everything OK, Neil? You sound a bit annoyed this morning!

Neil

Yeh, I'm OK, I'm just a bit frustrated. I spent a few hours organising all of the books on my bookshelves last weekend, but then my wife decided to clean the shelves and put the books back in a mess. They're all out of order again now!

Feifei

Oh, that is totally out of order!

Neil

Yeah, they are now totally out of order.

Feifei

I'm talking about your wife, not the books.

Neil

Eh?

Feifei

What I meant is that it wasn't fair that all your hard work went to waste – she should have been more considerate.

Neil

Ohhh, I see. You mean 'out of order' in a different sense! My books are out of order because they're disorganised, but my wife was out of order because she was inconsiderate.

Feifei

That's exactly right! Let's listen to some other examples of how you could use this alternate

meaning.

Examples

The referee in Saturday's football match was totally out of order! I couldn't believe he sent off our best player – he was obviously biased!

A passenger on the train this morning started shouting at me. She said I pushed her! I thought she was really out of order! I couldn't help it because the train stopped abruptly.

Who took my pen from my desk? It's the fourth time this week – this is out of order!

Feifei

This is The English We Speak from BBC Learning English and we're talking about the phrase 'out of order'. This phrase often means that something is disorganised or in the wrong order, but it is also used in spoken English to say that someone has been done unfair or inconsiderate. Could you give us another example of this, Neil?

Neil

Well, I wrote a script last week which you said was rubbish! I thought that was a bit out of order!

Feifei

Oh dear! I'm sorry if I offended you, Neil, but I think you might have misunderstood what I meant! When you printed it out and gave it to me, I couldn't read anything - there was ink all over it. Perhaps the printer was out of order?

Neil

And that's a third meaning of 'out of order'.

Feifei

Yes, Neil – it also means broken! Well, that's all we have...

Neil

Oh dear, it seems Feifei's mic is out of order! What she was trying to say was that's all we have time for this week, so join us again next week for more The English We Speak. Goodbye!